

Shakopee witnesses attributed this burst of political finance activity to the general election cycle and the availability of funds to secure participation in political events for the benefit of tribal council members and the tribe itself, which sought attention in Washington to issues of concern to the Shakopee people.

The Shakopee tribe is governed by a three-member Business Council elected by the general membership to four-year terms. The Business Council is required to approve all political contributions. Tribal leaders and employees provided conflicting information about how particular contributions were approved or funded, but it appears that the Business Council relied heavily on the advice of its in-house legal counsel, William Hardacker, in making political contributions during this period. In January 1996, Hardacker was appointed by the Business Council specifically to handle all political contribution requests at the federal level, while the tribe was guided on state contributions by North State Advisors, a lobbying firm.

The Business Council met regularly, and the minutes reflect discussion of many, though not all, of the federal contributions made by the tribe in 1996.⁵⁸³ In any event, no testimonial or documentary evidence indicates that the tribe's decisions to make political contributions beginning in 1996 were linked to Interior's denial of the Hudson application in 1995.

⁵⁸³For example, the May 22, 1996, \$5,000 DNC contribution is mentioned in the minutes of the preceding Business Council meeting, as are the Sept. 16 DNC and DSCC contributions. In contrast, the tribe could produce no minutes or other documents reflecting discussion or approval of the \$20,000 DNC contribution made on June 4, when the Business Council and its attorneys met with Fowler personally about the Shakopee adoption ordinance matter then pending at Interior.